



JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER
NAS BARBERS POINT, HAWAII 96352

FROM: JCRC - OPS

Reference: RP79-010
11 January 1980

SUBJ: Refugee Interview, Gravesite of US Casualty

TO: Commander, JCRC
Barbers Point HT 06862

SD

[REDACTED] reported that in June 1971 he was a member of the [REDACTED], which was part of a larger force attempting to break the siege at Firebase 5, located in the tri-border area. The source was unable to locate the precise position of Firebase 5 but it was a few kilometers south of Dak To.

While [REDACTED] unit was attempting to fight their way into the Firebase he saw the corpse of an American Advisor. Because the American remains were co-located with the remains of 30-40 Vietnamese members of the 1st Battalion, 42nd Regiment, 23rd ARVN Division, [REDACTED] assumes he was an advisor to that unit. [REDACTED] claims that, because of the fact the bodies were decomposing, his commander ordered the bodies buried. They were all buried in a shallow, unmarked, common grave and no identification was removed. This grave was about 800 meters from Firebase 5, in an unknown, to [REDACTED], direction.

~~_____~~ unit had no American advisors and he does not know if any report was made of this incident to other American advisors, or to Vietnamese officials.

CHARLES V CLAYTON
SFC
JCRC Operations-Sergeant



JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER
NAS BARBERS POINT, HAWAII 96862

25 MAR 1990

Reference: RP79-010A
(Refer to RP79-010 and
DIA msg 061536ZFEE80)
6 March 1980

FROM: JCRC - OPS

SUBJ: Burial of American Remains

TO: Commander, JCRC
Barbers Point, HI 96862

ST

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ provided the following information during this interview:

1. The date of the burial would have been about April 1971, as opposed to June 1971 as originally reported. This new date is based on source's discovery of a death certificate of a friend who had been killed at about the same time.
2. In attempting to establish a more precise location a series of questions produced the following information:
 - a. ~~_____~~ unit was airlifted by US aircraft, (C-130s) from Kontum to the vicinity of Tan Can (probably Dak To) and moved by VNAF helicopter to the battle area.
 - b. The battle occurred near the Cambodian border (within 2-10 km) and in the vicinity of Ben Het.
 - c. Source identified an area in the vicinity of YB7622 as the location of the battle.
 - d. The remains were first observed while they were in a trench that had been part of the 22nd Division's defense.
3. In response to questions that were raised concerning the individual's description and the condition of the remains the following was reported:
 - a. The remains were those of a white man, with a very thin face and wearing a mustache.
 - b. Source believed that the individual was a non-commissioned officer advisor to the 22nd Division.

Reference: AR80-011

c. [REDACTED] seemed to recall that the individual was related to supply or replacements or may have been a replacement, or involved in resupply. This recollection was based on comments made by other ARVN soldiers at the time of the incident.

d. He was quite sure that the individual had previously been at Tan Can with the 22nd Division.

e. He estimated that the individual may have been dead as long as one month when he saw the remains.

f. He could recall no equipment being associated with the burial site.

4. Attached as an inclosure is a sketch of the area in which the incident took place.

Interviewer's Comments: Some of the inconsistencies may result from the initial interviewer not understanding the circumstances that [REDACTED] was describing. For example his unit was not involved, directly, in the battle for FSB 5, and FSB 6 but were engaged in action that related to this battle. I am convinced that the incident that [REDACTED] describes took place, basically as he describes it, allowing for any deviations based on memory and recollection. I am also convinced that [REDACTED] does not have the requisite skill and/or recollection to establish a precise or even close approximation, on a map, of the area in which the action took place. Further, it is likely that he never knew exactly where he was even during the period of the battle, as far as a map location is concerned.

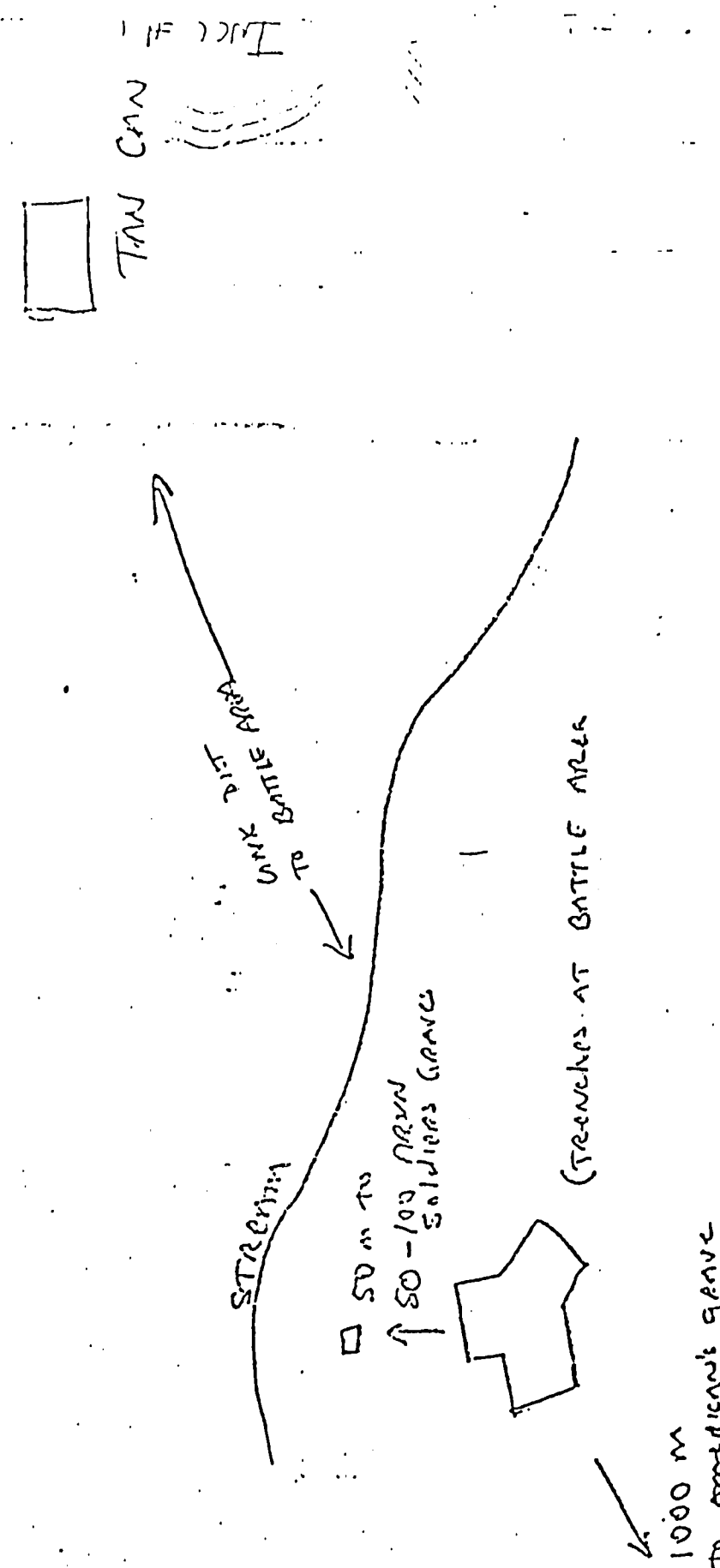
Charles V Clayton
CHARLES V CLAYTON
SEC USA
JERC Operations Sergeant

1 Incl
Sketch of burial site

JERC Operations Sergeant

1 Incl
Sketch of burial site

Based on interview with SOURCE





DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

DIA EVALUATION OF U.S. PW/MIA INFORMATION PROVIDED
BY VIETNAMESE REFUGEE [REDACTED]

Vietnamese refugee [REDACTED] provided firsthand information concerning the remains of an American advisor which were buried south of Dak To in southern Vietnam. [REDACTED] reported that in April 1971 he was a member of the [REDACTED] which was part of a larger force trying to break the siege at Firebase 5 in the tri-border area. While his unit was attempting to fight their way into the firebase, [REDACTED] saw the corpse of an American advisor. Because the American remains were located with the remains of 30-40 Vietnamese members of the 1st Battalion, 42nd Regiment, 23rd Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division, [REDACTED] assumed the deceased American was an advisor to the unit. The American remains were buried with the Vietnamese remains in a shallow, unmarked common grave about 800 meters (direction unknown) from Firebase 5. The American advisor was described as Caucasian, with a very thin face and wearing a mustache. [REDACTED] believed that the individual was a non-commissioned officer. Although this battle took place near the Cambodian border and in the vicinity of Ben Het, [REDACTED] was unable to locate the precise position of Firebase 5.

Assuming that [REDACTED] recollection of the date of the incident is correct, there was only one loss in 1971 within a 55 kilometer radius of the area described, which involved an unaccounted for U.S. serviceman, and whose incident of loss bears any similarity to the information provided. On 1 March 1971, NAME was attached to an ARVN unit about 22 kilometers from the location specified by [REDACTED] when the unit came under heavy enemy attack. The three other Americans serving with this unit evaded capture. They reported last seeing NAME inside the ARVN's defensive perimeter. While the surviving Americans were escaping, they called in air strikes on their former position.

The information provided by [REDACTED] does not give sufficient descriptive and background information on the American to make a positive correlation with NAME incident of loss. Further, as [REDACTED] was not altogether certain of the exact location of the firefight, the possibility that it may have taken place across the border in Cambodia or Laos cannot be discounted. Additional U.S. losses were sustained in Laos in 1970 and 1971 in the general area of the fighting described by [REDACTED]. Further correlation to any known incidents is not possible, however, due to the lack of substantive information provided by [REDACTED].

A copy of this report and evaluation will be maintained in the DIA data base for future reference.

Enclosure 2

BB

10083/DI-7 Mr. Ferro/Retyped DI-D/44708/arp/23 Mar

Mrs. James L. Birchim

23 MAR 1981

DATA

Dear Mrs. Birchim:

Lieutenant General Eugene F. Tighe, USAF, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, has requested that I respond to your letter to him dated 3 February 1981 in which you expressed your concern over the status of your son, Captain James D. Birchim, U.S. Army.

My office is responsible for assisting in our Government's efforts to obtain an accounting, from the Southeast Asian Communist Governments, for the 2500 Americans who were lost as a result of the hostilities in Indochina.

Based on the circumstances of your son's loss, his status was changed by the U.S. Army from MIA to presumed dead on 10 May 1971. Although a presumptive finding of death was issued on your son, we are continuing to press for an accounting from him, as well as all of the 2500 Americans lost in Southeast Asia. I can personally assure you that my office is making every effort to determine the fate of all Americans unaccounted-for in Southeast Asia, including your son. To do any less would be both unconscionable and unforgivable.

I hope that someday we can put to rest all of your and other families' anxieties and doubts about the fate of your loved ones.

If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

JERRY O. TUTTLE
Rear Admiral, USN
Vice Deputy Director
for Intelligence and
External Affairs

DI-7C RF
Ferro's cy
Subject Individual's cy
Coord Cy